

Tough Times

Vol. 1 No. 2 / Summer 2012

IS PEEL REGION Picking on the poor people?

Members of Peel Region's Human Services are on strike. So are members of the Public Works department which makes sure our water is safe to drink, and TransHelp, which provides transportation to people with disabilities.

Strikers claim that the employer – ostensibly the Region of Peel, but really us, the voters – are not offering a fair deal to union members.

Worse than that, they say that the people we elected to represent us on Peel Regional Council have chosen to dish out the worst mistreatment to those who are trying to help Peel's poorest residents.

Peel's Human Services Department staffs Ontario Works. Their job is to give monthly cheques to people who have exhausted their Employment Insurance, cashed their RRSPs, and are desperate for help.

These same strikers are also Outreach Workers, the on-the-ground group that visits Peel's soup kitchens to make sure everyone who needs help gets it, and to scoop homeless people into some sort of shelter on those killingly cold or threateningly fatal hot nights. They save lives.



Outreach worker Ruth Renwick (in the Canada top hat) usually spends her time helping people who are homeless. Now she's on the picket line with other social service workers who won't agree to wage and working conditions that they consider unfair. The picketers gather outside the Region of Peel offices on Hurontario north of Derry in Mississauga. Also in the picture: Denise Reja, Julia Chambers, Brian Purdy, Patricia Kovar, Tina Walzak, Tracy Cicerelli, Lenora Hopkins, Tara Dubreuil-Pocnic, Trisha Waechter, Pam Bilkhu, Taryn Hawley-Pitt. (Staff photo)

The mostly-female employees in the Ontario Works segment of Local 966 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees claim that the employer

(that's us again) has set them up.

Here's what they say: Any non-union employee of the Region of Peel gets a two per cent raise this year, possibly up

to nine per cent if the worker aces a performance appraisal process. Benefits remain in place.

But initially, CUPE members were offered no raise at all. Even with revised offers, they stand to lose about \$300 a year through changes in benefits.

Local 966 sees Peel Region as taking a step towards getting rid of unions. Not because union members don't do a good job, but because unions can insist on fair treatment in the workplace.

CUPE members believe, too, that Peel Region is following the example of the federal government in cutting down citizens – reducing Employment Insurance, legislating union members back to work, even insisting that future pensioners work until they are 67 instead of 65, even though right now anybody over 60 is hardpressed to find a job.

As voters in Peel Region, we are the employer. And we are the government. We want all our citizens to be well-paid and fairly treated.

We want them to be secure in their jobs and income now and in future. That's better for them, better for us, better for business.

Tell that to your local councillor.

Read more on page 3

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Disabilities Fair at LAC

If you are having trouble finding a job today, think how much more difficult your job hunt would be if you had a disability.

The foyer of Mississauga's Living Arts Centre was packed recently when the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities held a Connections Resource Fair.

Its purpose was to show people who have a disability what is available to help them and to show the public why such resources are needed, and how to use them.

The Coalition began in Peel nearly 30 years ago when groups helping people with disabilities realized they could avoid duplication and give more help to more people by working together.

Among the services provided to 1175 people last year:

- Employment Access – a service helping persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain jobs;
- Employment PAH! Workshop -- designed specifically for individuals



who are deaf or hard of hearing but fluent in American Sign Language, to learn fundamental employability skills;

- Work Readiness for Youth includes a paid eight-week employment skills workshop, followed by seven weeks at work;
- Student Transition Program is a partnership with the Peel District School

Board to help students with disabilities get jobs;

- Accessible Customer Service Workshops help organizations understand and comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

For more information
phone 1-866-969-9734,
TTY 905-755-9958
email empacc@disabilityaccess.org

TOUGH TIMES TABLOID PROGRESSES



EVERYBODY'S READING IT

Tough Times is preferred reading at this meeting of Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG), which produces Peel's newest tabloid newspaper. Tough Times' primary target audience is people who are homeless, using food banks, struggling to get by, then social service agencies and staff, trade union members, faith groups, local businesses. Enjoy.

(Photo by Dalia Emam)



Larry Jodouin, President of Local 1573 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, presents a cheque to Tough Times editor Edna Toth, being \$1 for every member of the Local, which represents union members at Brampton Transit. ATU is one of several unions sponsoring and circulating Tough Times.

(Photo by Mo Hashim)

ABOUT PEEL POVERTY ACTION GROUP

Peel Poverty Action Group is open to every individual and organization in Peel Region that cares about what poverty does to people.

It provides a safe place where people who are cash-poor and those who try to help them are encouraged to speak out-- and The Tough Times is part of that safe place.

The Group's mandate is to advocate for people in need and to educate the public about poverty issues.

Membership is free. Meetings take place at 9.30 a.m. the second Wednesday of every month, alternately in Mississauga or Brampton.

PPAG is registered under the Canada not-for-profit Corporations Act.

Contact ppagactiongroup@gmail.com to be added to the email list.

HOMELESS: THE VIDEO

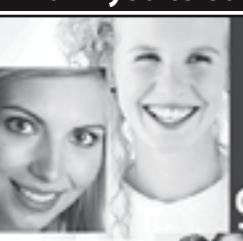
Spaces and Places: Uncovering Homelessness in the Region of Peel is a 15-minute DVD in which homeless people describe their experiences.

A team from Peel Poverty Action Group including a once-homeless person, will show the video to a group on request. There is no charge.

Email ppagactiongroup@gmail.com to book a showing. Allow about 45 minutes for the video and discussion.

The video was made by a team from York University, in cooperation with the Social Planning Council of Peel, financed by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Download: <http://ppag.wordpress.com/spaces-and-places-video/>

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CUPE 966: PEEL'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Are the union picket lines outside Region of Peel buildings a line of defence against cuts in old age pensions, cuts in health care, cuts in Employment Insurance?

Trade union members, and many others, think they are.

Labour accuses Canada's federal government of making war on unions – they claim that back-to-work legislation interferes with fair negotiations between employers and workers, that changes in the rules applied to temporary foreign workers will result in exploitation, that mass firing of federal civil servants is not so much a money saver as a threat to all workers – and that Ottawa is signalling other levels of government that dumping union workers is OK.

But it's not just unions that the federal government is blasting. Other social supports are being reduced.

While more workers are being fired, the feds are chopping into Employment Insurance. Currently, only four out of ten unemployed people get EI when they need it, even though they have paid into it for years.

Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement won't be available until age 67, instead of the current age 65. This take-away is being phased in over 10 years.

As well, funding is being pulled from environmental organizations, who have pointed out the dangers to our air and water from current permissive policies.

The members of Local 966 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees are embroiled not just in a disagreement with Peel Region which has chosen to adopt the federal government's anti-union stance, but in showing to everyone that divisive and un-



Pregnant Human Service workers carry more than babies -- unionists claim the future of many people in Peel is on the CUPE 966 picket line. From left: Mary Ann Tadros, Kristine Ventura, Ginette Mascarin-Moreau, Violette Geadah Haines (hidden behind the sign), Shillan Clarkson. (Photo by Joel Duff, Ontario Federation of Labour)



Rain came down with a vengeance on Human Service workers' strike rally in Mississauga's Civic Square. But that couldn't stop these employees of Peel Region from beating the drum and making noise about the fact they are on strike to get a fair deal not just for themselves but for all of Peel. (Staff photo)

fair policies must be resisted. CUPE is on the picket line for everyone.

And here's a reminder: It was trade unions and the NDP/CCF that persuaded a minority government in the early 1960s to introduce old age pensions, unemployment insurance and universal medical care to Canada – programs that now need protection.

The Human Service workers from Peel Region have one of the most difficult jobs in social services. They try to help people who are struggling, making sure that they get all the allowances to which they are entitled.

The folk they work with and for may be receiving Ontario Works assistance -- as little as \$599 a month. This would be a single person (families get more) who is out of work, has exhausted Employment Insurance, has no RRSPs or other source of income. It is a Human Service worker's job to ensure that OW folk receive any extra benefits to which they are entitled, such as a Special Diet allowance, travel and transportation for medical care or job search, any other goodies or responsibilities hidden in the 180 regulations that govern OW.

There are ironies in how

governments treat people who are struggling. Poor people in Peel receive less in social assistance than most local councillors get in car allowances.

MPs who chip away at pensions and Employment Insurance get \$157,731 a year.

Ontario's provincial government sets the rates for Ontario Works recipients. The folk who decide that \$7,200 a year is enough for others to live on, need more for themselves. MPPs' basic pay is \$116,000.

Regional councillors who are ultimately responsible for negotiating new contracts with unionized workers are paid \$49,428 by the Region of Peel,

plus a salary and car allowance by Brampton, Caledon or Mississauga taxpayers.

Brampton Mayor Sue Fennell gets \$220,382 a year – \$157,168 a year from the City, plus \$63,214 from the Region of Peel, plus car allowance of \$16,433.

Brampton's six Regional councillors get \$125,305 each, plus car allowance of \$11,941.

In Mississauga, Mayor Hazel McCallion's pay totals \$186,068, plus \$10,528 vehicle expenses. Mississauga's councillors get \$131,042, plus car allowance of \$17,304.

Caledon's Mayor Marlyn Morrison is paid a total of \$109,945; Caledon's four Regional councillors receive \$76,195 each, and mileage.

Human Services workers currently on the picket line are paid an average \$45,000, from which they pay union dues, a form of insurance against exploitation at work.

Councillors bargain for their jobs with us, the voters, at elections. Election campaign expenses -- lawn signs, pamphlets, etc. -- are in large part paid by donations, not exceeding \$750 per donor.

Many of the donors are corporations, including developers. Accepting such gifts is a longstanding practice and is not illegal.

Toronto has banned election donations by corporations or trade unions. Mississauga's Governance Committee is examining the issue, and Mayor Morrison is one of only two mayors in Ontario to declare that no councillor should accept donations from developers.

For the record, Mayor Morrison and Coun. Jim Tovey of Mississauga, don't accept developer money. And Mayor McCallion doesn't take campaign money from anybody.

Find who gets what from whom on municipal websites.

Words from the street

AFFORDABLE TRANSIT

Peel Region wants to reduce poverty. It is working on a strategy to achieve reductions starting this year, and continuing to 2015.

Among the aims is to provide "affordable and accessible transportation" that will move people around Brampton "in an efficient and affordable manner."

This bike and trailer was built from bits, and belongs to a regular diner at Knights Table. He got the wheels from an abandoned child's trailer, then added the box.

He's not contributing to pollution or wearing and tearing away at highway infrastructure.

He is also not threatened by the rising cost of bus fares in Brampton and Mississauga, or the



The 'Funeral' label is a joke.

high price of getting to and from other places in the GTA, or getting to job training or interviews, or attending public consultations about transit in Peel. He's also not concerned with travel subsidies available only to some students and to some folk who remain cash-poor even though they are working.

The bike may get attention when Peel's Poverty Strategy Committee begins to "research current affordable transit models."

It might even score a spot on another project the Poverty Strategy folk are looking at: "Partner with a local grocer to create a free or discounted pick-up and drop-off program at the store."

As with most government projects, Peel Region must measure its results. If by 2015, more people who are cash-poor can buy transit passes, then the Poverty Strategy folk will claim success.

Another measure might be to have more cash-poor people using a workshop to build their own bikes.

MEET SOPHIA

Meet Sophia, a Golden Retriever training to be a companion dog. She helps her owner Mientje Reijner of Brampton, to get up and down stairs. Reijner has been training helper and companion dogs for 17 years and says humans are not the only ones hurt by the economic downturns. Pets need help too.

"The loving dogs are filling my loneliness," says Reijner. "Being poor is difficult, loving is priceless."

Chris Hatch of Mississauga Food Bank reports his group provides goodies for dogs, cats, birds and small pets like gerbils. At press time, Tough Times had not located a Brampton food bank that includes pet food in its hampers. If you know of one, please contact Knights Table at (905) 454-8725.



In the United Kingdom and U.S., food banks have been created especially for animals.

ISSUES ON INCOME AND FOOD SECURITY

SPENDING MONEY

Middle-aged woman:

I am a registered nurse, with a Bachelor of Science degree. I used to work at Peel Memorial, but now the hospital hires young people coming out of nurses training programs at lower wages and lets the more experienced people go.

Young man:

Temp agencies put you on a list and it's two or three months before you are hired. A lot of jobs are general labour, or short-term or part-time. You end up getting about \$10 an hour, so a 40-hour week it's about \$400 before deductions. In a month, at least \$600 goes to rent (for a room). You need \$30 a week for travel and the rest, maybe \$500, for all other expenses like food, and clothing. All that depends on full time work. You can't really save much, so when the job ends you have nothing.

Middle-aged man:

My Ontario Works worker has suspended my file and I am worried that I won't be able to pay the rent.

It seems they overpaid me a few months back and I didn't follow up then because I was going through a medical emergency and treatment at that time. I don't have a phone except a 311 cell phone for medical emergencies. I don't have enough money to keep using a pay phone. I go to John Howard to use a phone or computer, or I come to the Knights Table to use the phone. I am trying to get in contact with my worker but I have to keep leaving a message. I am pretty stressed about maybe getting kicked out from my place if I can't pay the rent.

EATING

Grandmother:

You need to be budget conscious and buy items when they come on sale. Knights Table is really good. It bridges the gap.

Middle-aged man:

They get a lot of canned goods here, especially chick peas or beans. You can use chick peas in a lot of different ways. You just mix a little oil, salt, some spices and some chopped vegetables if you have any.

It's a lot cheaper when you make it yourself than when you buy it ready-made in the store.

Young man:

I have diabetes. I give myself four injections each day. I have to be careful not to get stressed or my blood sugar goes up. I should have lots of fruits and vegetables but I can't always afford it. I don't cook when I am by myself because it puts my sugar levels up. Once when I was alone, cooking something, I felt weak, and just turned off the stove in time before I passed out. My roommate came home a couple of hours later and found me and called 911.

Young Mom:

When I come to the food bank I take a taxi to get home with the bags of food. My daughter and I experiment with different recipes depending on what we have. I am teaching her to prepare food in different ways. Did you know that you can keep bread in the freezer for up to nine months? Sometimes we make bread pudding. My daughter really likes it when we put chocolate milk over the bread as a treat.

Read more words from the street on page 10

When a house is not a home

A VISIT TO A HOMELESS SHELTER IN PEEL

BY JESSICA HENWOOD

I have never been without food, or without shelter, or without a family to help me. For some residents of Peel that's not the case. Many people go to soup kitchens and food banks and stay at emergency shelters.

There is no single story about landing in poverty and few of those stories are the stereotypical tales of the lazy bum.

David Carleton, executive director of Salvation Army Residential Services in Peel, is based at a homeless shelter for men in Brampton.

Carleton says that people using the shelter could be doctors, dentists, taxi drivers, a 'United Nations of people' sharing one thing in common: They are broken – spiritually, financially, and in their physical and mental health.

Making the decision to go to a shelter is a last resort. While staff provide basic needs and services, the shelter is a temporary house, not a place to call home.

My visit began after a drive along a nondescript road among unattractive industrial buildings in an ugly part of town. No homes or houses nearby, only concrete and tar macadam unblemished by a blade of grass.

This particular shelter was where single men go when they have nowhere to go. The inside was more like a low security prison with mirrored glass in the front door, dull painted walls in all the rooms, two of them filled with bunk beds – 50 in one room, 20 in another.

Security and safety are a priority



Left photo: David Carleton, executive director for the Salvation Army of a men's shelter in Brampton, talks meal plans with cook Eden Lucien. Right photo: Frank Grassa does his best to welcome people to the men's shelter in Brampton, where people go when they have nowhere to go. (Staff photos)



which means that rules are spelled out clearly: no weapons, no booze and no illegal drugs.

Men entering the shelter with addictions may go to the hospital for detox, followed by attempts at rehab.

Other rules include leaving the dormitory room by 8:30 a.m. and returning to the shelter no later than 10 p.m. with lights out by 11 p.m.

Residents are encouraged to look for work and find their own place so they can move out. Within two weeks they must have a plan for leaving, worked out with the shelter's housing officer, whose job is to make and maintain connections with landlords and give resi-

dents a list of vacancies.

Though the shelter has room for 70 men, nobody is turned away, even if it means mattresses on the floor. The shelter provides food – breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks at 8 p.m., a secure locker for each individual, bed and bedding, clothing if required, showers, toiletries, an area to do laundry, five computers, and bus tickets when needed.

Although the list of amenities might seem just enough, some people who are struggling would never go to a shelter, and others dread going back. Staff say that people using the shelter for the first time are terrified just from the fear of the unknown.

When we think about poverty and homelessness we might ask what basic necessities the state should provide. Is the state (that means us) responsible merely for keeping people alive, or does it include ensuring that everyone has a place to call home?

We should work together to provide something better, if only because circumstances can change in an instant. Without a support system of family, friends plus a social safety net, homelessness can become a harsh reality for anyone.

Jessica Henwood is completing an honours BA in Crime and Deviance at University of Toronto – Mississauga.

Support systems – brakes on the speeding, flaming bus down life's twisted highway – come in many forms. Ideally, family, friends and community keep one from careening into the abysmal ditch. Realistically, we might find those brakelines were cut years before. Sabotaged, or faulty right out of the factory.

You may find yourself swerving headlong into dark, soggy fields of disillusion; first upright and then tilted, drifting and finally resting on our sides – uninsured.

The first time I arrived at the Salvation Army shelter in Brampton I was uncertain of what to expect, but certain that park benches were not made for sleeping.

A young naive man trying to process the complexities of these new surroundings – these people in my identical predicament – without a home. The pacings of a tracksuit-garbed youth loudly arguing with himself. The painted face of a man no older than 40, attempting to dial a phone number with perpetually shaking hands and nodding head. The gaze of hatred from one in a corner spitting obscenities at any who pass. Unheeded. Ignored.

I left after the first night, saying to the bemused staff: "There are those here that need this place far worse than I."

I was given a bagged lunch. The first night sleeping in a shelter dorm (13 bunk beds, a room of over 20 men) is likely a sleepless one.

Aware of every peripheral movement, sudden sound and peculiar smell, the morning comes as consciousness ebbs and then the lights snap on. "Everybody up – it's seven o'clock."

Years had passed when I found myself once again walking up to the non-descript single-level building, and this time retreat was not an option. It seldom is for those who have come to the point of breaking down as I had, giving up from one setback too many and out of answers and direction – out of support systems. Worse, I had turned to alcohol and drugs to quell the screaming, crazed sense of dread while plowing headlong through the guardrail and into that metaphorical aforementioned abysmal ditch.

Snapshots



All hands were at work on this community mural in the office of Jagmeet Singh, MPP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton. With the help of artist Leo Dias, up to 15 young volunteers donned disposable gloves and daubed handprints around a painting of the globe – indicating the worldwide nature of art. Grouped in front of the picture at Gurkiran Kaur, Japjeet Kaur, Harmeet Kaur, Anoop Kaur, Harleen Kaur. (*Staff photo*)



Know your rights at work is the topic of information sessions at Newcomer Information Centres all over Peel. A recent session at the Brampton Centre involved Antonina Boulkanova, Coordinator at the Newcomer Information Centre at 263 Queen Street East, Brampton, with participants in a "Know Your Rights at Work" information session, Robert Hakim, Minimol Sanjeeva Kumar, Jitender Sharma and staff member Employment Referral and Information Specialist Taher Md Abu. (*Staff photo*)



Neighbourhood gardeners are turning the soil near McMurchy Community Centre into crops of beans, carrots, cucumbers and more. Some of the harvest will be kept by the gardeners, some will go to local food banks and services feeding the homeless, the elderly, and families in need.

Relaxing after a hard day's digging are: Devon Calder, Stan Chmelyk, Myrna Adams, Patti Chmelyk. (*Photo by Christine Massey*)



This picture assembled by young people from St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School in Oakville earned \$5,000 for Brampton's Knights Table. This is how: the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative provides incentives to young people to create social change. Grade 10 students at St. Mildred's studied local social service groups, and teams of young people presented 20 projects. The poster and presentation that went with it won the top prize, a donation to Knights Table.

Homeless, foodless, something new

Peel has 15,000 families on a waiting list for homes they can afford. And they may wait 20 years for a place. The numbers of homeless people are growing as well-paid and secure jobs disappear. The numbers using soup kitchens and food banks is on the rise. Two organizations are trying something new to solve these problems.

Pick up Malton homeless, pick up Caledon

MALTON HOMELESS

New efforts have begun in Malton to help people experiencing homelessness.

Job 1: Open a housing registry where landlords can list available places free of charge. The registry began in April, and 46 landlords have already signed on.

It's part of Malton Housing Resource Centre, just opened on the lower level of Westwood Mall specifically to help people experiencing homelessness or about to be homeless. The Centre gets five visitors a day looking for housing or worried about keeping the place they are in.

The alternative is going to a shelter, or sleep-

ing on park benches or in stairwells, or just hanging out in the bush.

Lisa Davis is the Housing Coordinator for the Resource Centre. Part of her job is to contact landlords, keep a list of available housing, help landlords and tenants negotiate leases, encourage both sides to deal with problems immediately, rather than let them fester.

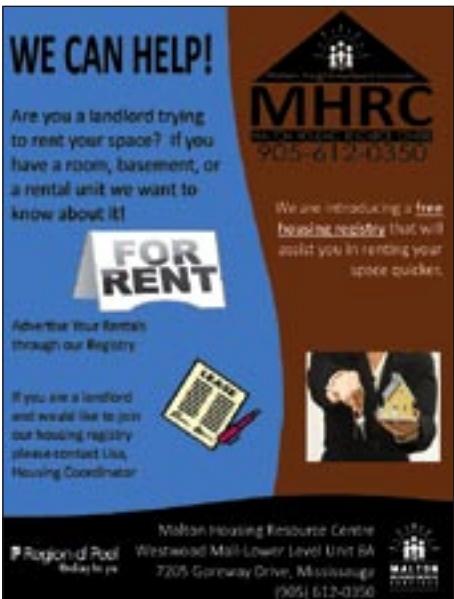
Davis visits listed rooms to confirm that the space is liveable. Knocks on doors to find more accommodation. And she talks with potential tenants about maintaining good relations with the landlord, paying the rent on time, keeping their

places clean and tidy.

There's also general advice about surviving homelessness – in summer keep out of the sun; keep cool by using libraries and other air-conditioned places that don't charge for admission; drink plenty of water.

Ensuring that cash-poor people receive the social assistance they are entitled to, such as Ontario Works payments, is also part of Davis' job.

And she hands out flyers (shown below) in Westwood Mall, to make sure that cash-poor people, landlords, and the public, know that help for homelessness is there for the asking.



Middle picture:
Welcoming the new housing for the homeless plan in Malton are Ward Five Coun. Bonnie Crombie, Joyce Templesmith, executive director of Malton Neighbourhood Service, Lisa Davis, newly-appointed housing coordinator for MNS, and Jagmeet Singh, MPP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.
(Staff photo)

CALEDON INVESTS IN HEALTH, JOBS, AND NEW IDEAS

Here's a food support program that's more than a food bank.

You can invest in learning a new job, finding out how to eat better, the whole family can discover how to cook better, explore farming, maybe take part in a money-making business.

Caledon Community Services (CCS) is the food financier. It is Caledon's largest health, employment, resettlement, small business development and social service agency, and its food bank plan is part of a homelessness and food strategy.

"For years, CCS has offered a small food hamper program out of a closet within our Bolton home office. No longer," says Michelle Stubbs, Director of Community Resources. "Funding received

from the Graham Family Foundation, the United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel has helped us."

A 3,600 square-foot building is planned and the hunt is on for investments and volunteers to help with furnishings and equipment and day-to-day operations.

"This is the right time, after years of planning, to launch this exciting innovation for our community", noted Monty Laskin, CCS Executive Director.

In charge of the project titled Recipe for Resiliency is Kim D'Eri, manager of Poverty Reduction Partnerships for CCS. Her job is to set up the food program and find affordable housing.

Homelessness is a surprise to people in Caledon and outside.

The Town of Caledon has beautiful homes, horse farms, rolling hills and network of walking paths, all the appearances of wealth and prosperity. A closer look reveals many families living in difficult situations where poverty is quite apparent.

Caledon has 150-200 families that rely on crisis and support services every month, and up to six new individuals or families a month seek help because they are homeless or precariously housed.

But they usually can't stay in Caledon, which has little affordable or transitional housing. Families who are struggling may have to relocate in either Orangeville or Brampton, where there are more resources.

Who are Caledon's homeless/precariously housed and where do they come

from? The reality is that for the most part, they are people who once had secure housing and have resided in Caledon for most of their lives. Each has their own story to tell; job loss, critical illness, family breakdown, etc. But all with the same outcome of now living in poverty.

CCS is recruiting Caledon families and individuals who have space in their home, a suite in their basement, or a spare house and are willing to rent it out below market. In exchange, CCS will provide support for the tenancy agreement and give the tenant a range of programs to sustain their independence and move them towards self-sufficiency.

Caledon residents who can help contact Kim D'Eri at (905) 584-2300, ext. 202 or kderi@ccs4u.org

Letters to the Editor

Tough Times welcomes letters from readers. Writers may use a pen name if they wish. Tough Times needs to know who you are, so include a phone number and address, but your identity will not be revealed without your permission. Letters may be edited. Email letters to toughtimestabloid@gmail.com or deliver to Knights Table, Unit #6, 116 Kennedy Road South, Brampton, ON L6W 3E7

Enlightening newspaper

Unfortunately, not enough is done or even said about the catastrophic state of poverty in Peel, or the country for that matter.

This paper gives me hope that the poor and underprivileged are not forgotten. We hope to hear and see more about poverty issues which not only affect those in poverty but also puts a social and economic strain on the entire country.

Fayaz Karim | Mississauga

Unions are better

Congratulations on your inaugural edition. I have worked for various companies since I was 16. I must state personally that when I was a union-supported employee, my work-place environment was the most healthy. I knew I was entitled to two 15-minute breaks and a 30-minute lunch period for every day I worked.

As a non-union-supported employee, I did not have those privileges.

My primary question is: How can prosperity increase while employment decreases? Mass lay-offs of employed people in order to 'decrease costs' can only create more unemployment and poverty. It seems our federal and provincial governments are more interested in selling our natural resources to multi-national corporations overseas.

Debbie Baker

Making a difference

Congratulations to the leadership of Peel Poverty Action Group for initiating this effort to create a greater awareness about poverty in our Region of Peel. This action will engage more community members to get involved in making a difference to those who are in need.

Let's increase the momentum for this movement. Another step in the right direction. Keep up the great work, PPAG.

Rafika Mawani

President | End to Global Poverty Foundation

Move Knights Table back to downtown

Knights Table needs to be central to downtown Brampton, as more needs will be met and downtown is central to most people.

Remove the red tape and allow poverty to be seen so community members can act and address the real issues in our neighbourhood.

Hiding homelessness or stating that poverty does not exist will not make it go away. These are 'tough times' and soup kitchens such as Knights Table need to be accessible for all.

Lisa Davis

Housing Coordinator | Malton Housing Resource Centre

Feed my sheep

I came to Canada in 2009, as a refugee. I love Canada, it is a beautiful and blessed country.

Since November, 2009, I am working as a volunteer at Knights Table. I love Knights Table and really enjoy working here, serving hungry people, counselling and praying with them.



It is my humble prayer: God bless Knights Table, staff, clients, and people who support Knights Table.

Jesus said Feed my sheep (John, 21:17) It is our duty to feed His sheep. Then we will be blessed. Amen.

Paul Dean

ordained minister of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Looks great

I have finally seen the paper, I love it !!! Thank you for the article! But over and above that- I think it looks great !!!

Melissa Toney

Chair, Black Community Action Network - Peel Region of Peel- Human Services Department

Contemporary issues

I read your inaugural edition of Tough Times and you and your team deserve a pat for a job well done! Right from the layout to the meticulously written articles and reports, your strive for excellence is showcased. Selecting contemporary issues, treating them with deserving seriousness and perfect choice of words make Tough Times appealing. Disabilities can't stop us, The Gender of Caring, Brampton Jobs at Stake...all hold a mirror to reality. Wishing you success repeats...Encore!

Rajasree Ramesh | Mississauga

"Much needed"

I was so happy to get a copy of Tough Times and was very impressed with the quality of the articles and the pictures. This newspaper is much needed in this economic environment. I wish you a loyal readership.

Joyce Temple-Smith

Executive Director | Malton Neighbourhood Services

Congrats on a great paper!!

I run a small rag 'Street Voice' as part of my website The Dunstan Times started by my great great grandfather in 1862. I love your newspaper idea. I compliment you all a great first edition.

Mike Milne

ToughTimes

The Tough Times is published quarterly.

Next Fall issue in September. Deadline for ads and editorial is August 15, 2012

We encourage and welcome volunteer writers, reporters, artists, cartoonists, photographers, distributors and sales folk to join the Tough Times.

Please send your letters to:
toughtimestabloid@gmail.com

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Tough Times has a minimum press run of 10,000 copies, distributed throughout Peel Region.

Target audience is people experiencing homelessness, using foodbanks and soup kitchens, people who are struggling, plus faith groups, social service agencies, trades unions, business people, and the general public.

To advertise in The Tough Times:

email: toughtimestabloid@gmail.com

Phone: 905 826-5041

Mailing address: Unit #6, 116 Kennedy Road South, Brampton ON L6W 3E7, Canada

Advertising rates: (sales tax extra)

Business card:	\$60
1/16 page	\$70
1/8 page	\$100
1/4 page	\$150
1/2 page	\$260
3/4 page	\$350
Full page	\$520

A full page is approximately 10 inches wide by 12 inches deep = 120 square inches.

Colour \$35 extra | E&OE

A pant load

I just had my taxes done at and to my delight, I do get a refund, but since I'm 'low income', the government, in their wisdom, has decided to give it to me in monthly installments. I guess it's so I don't blow it all on a necessary major purchase.

I was going to get the muffler on my car fixed, but now I'll have to save up, or use credit and pay interest. I hope I can get it back on the road before the end of summer. Thanks a pant load Mr. Flaherty!

G. W. Markle

Life in the 'hood

DIXIE BLOOR HELPS EVERY AGE

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre has everything a neighbourhood could want.

It is a non-profit organization offering free activities to people who live in Mississauga East.

It offers language instruction for newcomers to Canada (morning, afternoon, full time, evenings and Saturdays); assistance filling in forms; information about family reunification; how to get help if you or someone you know has a disability; translation of documents; notarizing legal papers pertaining to settlement in Canada.

For newcomers looking for work, Dixie Bloor offers help in developing specialized business vocabularies, access to computers and directories, assistance in meeting established business people and finding volunteer opportunities.

The Centre offers occasional care for children while parents are busy at



(Photo courtesy of the City of Mississauga.)

its offices. Activities are offered for families with newborns to age six, for seniors, and after-school homework clubs, recreation, and arts for youth.

In case you have hassles with your landlord or tenant, or neighbours, or even with the family, Dixie Bloor offers conflict resolution support. Issues are

resolved three times out of four. And it's free.

Dixie Bloor's main office is attached to Burnhamthorpe Library at 3650 Dixie Road, Mississauga.
Phone (905) 629-1873
www.dixiebloor.ca
info@dixiebloor.ca

JOBS WANTED

Looking for work? Tough Times will publish a FREE ad for you.

KITCHEN HELPER looking for daytime work. 905 867-059.

GROCERY STORE WORKER seeks job. Can take inventory, stock shelves, clean floors and shelves, any grocery store work. 647 858-5337

A-Z DRIVER looking for local work or shunting. 647 764-7068

EVERYTHING CHICKEN butchering, chopping, preparing for cooking. 647 856-4764

WELDING AND CONSTRUCTION interlock, concrete. 647 780-1755

PAINTER, HANDYMAN, HEFTY GUY looking for work. 905 460-5921

Disclaimer: Tough Times is not responsible for the accuracy of the information offered in these advertisements, nor for the good intentions of potential employees or employers. Advertisers and responders should be cautious. For instance, consider meeting in public places until trust is established.

DON'T GO HUNGRY

If you are struggling to make ends meet, have to choose between paying rent or buying food, can't afford formula for your baby, or have more bills than income ... The Mississauga Food Bank is here to help you.

Anyone in need and living in Mississauga is eligible to use a neighbourhood food bank or other food program regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race or immigration status.

You will receive 7-10 days of nutritious food for each member of your family once a month to help you eat well.

Visit www.themississaugafoodbank.org/getfood to find the food program closest to you or call 905-270-5589 for help.



Brampton CAW urges a national auto policy

BY LEON RIDEOUT

Canada's auto industry has survived years of turmoil. Despite downsizing, the industry continues to make an immense contribution to Canada's productivity, exports, and to the lives of Canadian families.

Auto jobs continue to face threats from globalization and free trade agreements, apathetic governments, and corporations being more aggressive than ever against workers. The GTA region is a key part of Ontario's auto industry, home to three assembly plants and more than 200 auto parts facilities and the nation's concentration of auto jobs.

Brampton is the home of a major auto manufactory, the Chrysler Assembly Plant which is linked to Benteler Automotive, Oakley Sub Assembly and Syncreon in our community.

The Canadian Auto Workers Union Local 1285 is a proud Local with over 50 years of service in the

Brampton community. We have been recognized for our contributions and continuous support to events such as the Brampton Battalion Adopt a School program, Carabram, local parades and financial contributions to a variety of charities such as the Knights Table, Ste. Louise Outreach Centre and United Way of Peel.

Our Local would like to inform the public of the importance of auto jobs in the community of Brampton, the threats facing the auto industry and the CAW's proposal to strengthen auto jobs for the future of all Canadians.

We are currently lobbying all levels of government for the implementation of an Auto Policy and we are asking for the support of the community to protect these important manufacturing jobs in the Province of Ontario.

Leon Rideout is the president of CAW Local 1285

Parkinson SuperWalk Raising Funds and Awareness

Over 100,000 Canadians suffer from Parkinson's Disease. Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease. That means the disease will progress over time, and the symptoms will worsen with age. Currently there is no cure.

People with Parkinson's exhibit various symptoms from tremors, to loss of balance, to stiffness and freezing, to loss of motor control and difficulties speaking. It is with the support and assistance of over 400,000 caregivers and relatives that those with Parkinson's are able to cope with their symptoms and strive to live a normal and healthy life (if only by their standards).

Every year Parkinson Society Canada holds a national event to raise funds to support Parkinson sufferers and their caregivers. But more importantly they raise awareness of the disease so the general public will become aware of those in their midst that are afflicted.

You all know Michael J Fox. But do you know anyone else with Parkinson's?

Please join us on Sunday September 9 at South Fletcher's Sportsplex and to help us raise awareness. You do not need to raise sponsorship money to walk with us. Visit ParkinsonSuperWalk.com for more information.



More Words from the street



"Here, this is for you."

I looked away from my paper work and saw this beautiful piece of art work.

Then I looked up and saw who gave it to me. I said "Thanks."

He painstakingly draws with blue ink. Imagine the number of hours that it takes to draw such a magnificent piece of work. Every single person has a story, a skill, a talent that needs to be shared. Someone will be inspired; will be touched; will be in awe.

ISSUES ON SCHOOLS AND TRAVELLING

ON EDUCATION

Middle-aged mom:

When my kids were born I did the planning for university. Now they are in university at York, and Sheridan (psychology and social work). They live at home and get a travel pass, weekly (approx \$27) or monthly (approx \$130). My oldest daughter just finished dentistry, but she has a \$375,000 debt from grad school that she has to pay back. It's a big stress. She is making a payment arrangement.

Young mom:

It's so important for the kids to have a good teacher who likes them but keeps discipline too. I make sure the kids do their home-

work. They all like reading. The twins are very good at spelling. My younger son likes math best.

ON TRANSPORTATION

Middle-aged mom:

Transit is \$3.25 now. It's too expensive. There needs to be a transit pass for those who can't afford it. You need to be able to get around, to the store, to appointments for yourself or your kids.

Young mom:

It really helps to have the food bank at the Knights. I bring bags but everything is too heavy to carry, so my sister helps me. Sometimes a friend with a car is able to drive me.

This issue of Tough Times is made possible by:

Local 966 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees; CAW Local 1285; Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council; Local 1573 of the Amalgamated Transit Union; Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation District 19 – Peel; CUPE Ontario; and advertisers and friends.

Why people on welfare are poor AND WHY THE RICH LIKE IT THAT WAY

BY SIMON BLACK

Who benefits from a miserly welfare system in which rates are set below the poverty line? Ontario's Social Assistance Review Commission has heard from hundreds of social assistance recipients and anti-poverty activists and they have all said the same thing: welfare is broken and needs to be fixed. Rates are too low, rules are too punitive, and the system does more to punish than to help the poor. Yet for government and their rich friends, the welfare system is doing exactly what it was designed to do.

Poor relief, as welfare was originally called, was never designed to be a benevolent handout to the poor. From its roots in England's Poor Laws through to the Harris Conservative's social assistance reforms of the mid-90s, welfare has operated on the principle of "less eligibility." The historic 1834 report on Britain's Poor Laws, issued at the behest of King William IV, stated: "The first and most essential of all conditions, a principle which we find universally admitted, even by those whose practice is at variance with it, is, that his (the relief recipient's) situation on the whole shall not be made really or apparently so eligible (i.e., desirable) as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class."

Over 150 years later, the logic remains: The recipient of social assistance should never be better off than the lowest paid wage worker in the labour market. This is exactly what Mike Harris had in mind when his government introduced workfare and cut welfare rates by 21.6 per cent, and why the McGuinty government has done so little to reverse these changes.

Since the early 1990s, Ontario's la-



You've got to be resilient to survive on the streets. When your shoes give out, some cardboard, a ballpoint pen, and a utility knife, can keep you on your feet.

(Photos by Randy Johnson)

bour market has been characterized by the growth and persistence of low-wage and insecure jobs, or "precarious employment." One in six workers in the province is making a poverty wage. Whether employed part-time in the fast-food industry or working as a security guard through a temp agency, the growing ranks of the working poor live in a world of labour market insecurity. Many workers cycle between low-wage employment and periods on social assistance, as they don't often have the hours required to qualify for employment insurance.

Business needs these workers to maintain the low-wage-big-profits model of the "Wal-Mart economy" in

which the rich get richer and the poor get dead end jobs. And governments across the country are in no mood to provide decent jobs through an expansion of public sector employment, or reverse the deregulation of labour markets that they've so vigorously pursued.

With these shifting trends in employment, welfare functions to ensure a cheap and flexible workforce to populate the lower reaches of the province's labour market. To paraphrase University of British Columbia professor Jamie Peck, welfare today is not about creating jobs for people who don't have them but about creating workers for jobs nobody wants.

Miserly benefit levels, restrictive eligibility criteria and the ritualized stigmatization of those who must navigate the administrative maze that is welfare, are all in keeping with the government's desire to ensure a job at any wage, under any conditions, remains preferable to the receipt of social assistance. The province's tooth-and-nail fight to keep social assistance recipients from having greater access to the special diet program (which they may do away with altogether) is only the latest manifestation of maintaining the principle of less eligibility.

So the rich benefit from a system that pushes the poor into low-wage jobs. Low wages mean bigger profits for those who own and control the majority of wealth. And employed workers who see the treatment doled out to those on social assistance think twice about leaving a bad job for welfare.

So what are poor people and their allies to do when faced with a welfare system designed to do more damage than good? Well, the first thing we can do is join organizations like Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) and fight like hell to better the system and our lives. Our collective strength is greater than that of any one individual. Second, we need to work with our partners in the labour movement to ensure that all jobs are good jobs with living wages. Together we can ensure that both the welfare system and the labour market provide economic security and dignity. Only then will we have a system that benefits the rest of us and not the rich.

Simon Black is completing a doctoral degree in political science at York University.

MIAG

MIAG
Centre for
Women &
Families

Is offering a program on:
'Women's and Children's Health and Well-Being Hub'

Women 13 and up:
Physical exercises, healthy cultural food demonstrations, health education.

Children three to 12:
Exercise with music and songs, and health-fun games, in a separate room

Ten-week program | Saturdays 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

60 West Drive, Brampton, ON L6T 3T6.
Contact Elsa or Karuna to register: 905-270-6252, e-mail info@miag.ca

OCCUPY
BRAMPTON

We are a leaderless group whose decisions are made through participatory consensus building. We come together to create meaningful change by working within our local community and in solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the globe who are fighting for a just, sustainable, and joyful future. All are welcome. All are needed. Together we are strong.

Find us: Occupy Brampton on Facebook
Join us: Attend a General Assembly, Tuesdays at 7:30 pm at the Gazebo in Gage Park
Contact us: OccupyBrampton@gmail.com

Happy Birthday, Rhonda

Rhonda Collis is a friend to just about every homeless or precariously-housed person in Brampton, plus everyone who has struggled to overcome addictions, or otherwise scraped the bottom of Peel's poverty barrel.

Her job as a community development worker brings her in contact with many individuals and families who are struggling. It's a job that has brought her many friends too, among her colleagues in Peel Health. And of course, there's always her family – husband Lorne, daughter Lisa, son Adam and his wife Marisa, and granddaughter Lillian.

Many of Rhonda's friends from all the walks of her life came together at Knights Table on May 2 to celebrate Rhonda's 60th birthday. There were all the regular customers of Knights Table which is Peel Region's only community kitchen serving free meals every day of the year, two Rhonda birthday cakes to include everybody in the revelry and a few speeches.

Rhonda grew up in the Kensington Market area of Toronto, quit school at 16 to work in clothing stores and score special rates on the latest fashions. At age 18, she married Lorne and they have been together ever since. Adam was born when Rhonda was 23, followed by Lisa at age 26.

Three years later, Rhonda went back to school



– to York University in search of a BA in psychology. She's still looking for that elusive degree, because when she realized she was smart enough to make the Dean's List, reserved for top academic achievers, she dropped out of school again to work with the Family Education Centre of Peel, eventually becoming its ex-

Knights Table offers all its friends a Happy Birthday Party

Tell us your birthday date .. We arrange the cake and entertainment. Invite your friends to join you at Knights Table for an hour or two of fun. They make a gift in your name to Knights Table. All gifts over \$20 merit a charitable tax receipt. Make cheques payable to Knights Table.

Venue: Unit #6 - 116 Kennedy Road South, Brampton ON L6W 3E7 (east side of Kennedy, north of Stafford, south of Clarence)

ecutive director. The Education Centre first operated from Rhonda's house.

Later, she moved to North Brampton Community Connection which had free space in Peel Health offices. When Peel Health wanted a community development specialist, Rhonda took the job. That was 21 years ago, and she is still working at it.

This was a special birthday for Rhonda, not just because she turned 60. It was her first birthday party at Knights Table. Instead of gifts of flowers and goodies, Rhonda's friends made donations to Knights Table in Rhonda's name, bringing in more than \$1,000 for hungry people.

BRAMALEA COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

is pleased to announce a new initiative targeted at providing health care for those who are homeless in Brampton. This initiative is staffed by a Primary Care Nurse (Gary D) who will see people at various locations throughout Brampton and who will be based out of Bloom Clinic in downtown Brampton.

This program is funded by the Region of Peel and is offered in partnership with Knights Table and Regeneration House.

The average Bramptonian would likely be surprised at the number of residents in Brampton who are homeless and are in need of health care and other services that many of us take for granted. Homeless persons are numerous, carry a significant burden of illness and



Bramalea
Community Health Centre

face challenges in accessing healthcare. It is difficult to describe with precision the health problems of homeless persons, in part because of the heterogeneity of this population across geographical regions. While there are limitations of outreach to people experiencing homelessness, research has shown that outreach improves health. The role of our the Homeless Outreach Nurse is one that builds a personal connection with the residents of Brampton that may play a role in helping the person improve his or her housing, health status, or social support network. The Homeless Outreach Nurse "meets people where they are." This means not

only contacting people in non-traditional settings, but also meeting their need for connection, reassurance, and support through empathetic listening, minimizing stereotyping, and providing greater choices. The basic needs of individuals are addressed to ensure survival on the streets.

Services currently provided in the Brampton community include:

- Assistance with chronic disease prevention and management (e.g. blood pressure, blood glucose)
- Treatment of wounds and injuries
- Assistance with forms
- Referral to emergency and mental health services

- Assistance with health system navigation
- Health teaching, counselling, and instrumental support
- Referral to community services such as food banks and shelters

An emphasis is placed on immediate care for acute issues, with a view that persons requiring more complex care can be successfully integrated into Bramalea Community Health Centre main site and the larger health care system.

Currently the Homeless Outreach Nurse provides these services throughout the Brampton community at the following locations:

- GRACE UNITED CHURCH
- THE KNIGHTS TABLE

If you would like more information on this program please call Gary at 905-595-0570